

2024 FPC Justice and Advocacy Committee Charter updated 1/25/24

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Justice and Advocacy Committee (JAC) is to lead church members and others in “working for the transformation of society by seeking justice” and “the proper use of the gifts of God’s creation”, as specified in the Book of Order. As a PC(USA) Matthew 25 church, our primary focus is on understanding the systemic forces that tyrannize, as well as, supporting the forces that restore the dignity of all people.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Provide information and education regarding social justice issues impacting the most vulnerable people in our community, nation and world. Explain historical events and the exploitation of marginalized groups.
- B. Encourage member engagement in actions to correct these issues.
- C. Promote ways for members to better care for all of God’s creation.
- D. Create opportunities for discussion of current issues and ways to take action as individuals and in groups. Enumerate the costs and benefits of various options.
- E. Communicate with members and others through as many means as possible. (FPC website, social media, bulletins, community publications, etc.) following established FPC policy.
- F. Establish connections and share information with organizations and individuals working for social justice and caring for the earth.
- G. Nurture relationships with BIOPIC and other marginalized people.
- H. Inform session of committee activities and seek approvals, as appropriate.
- I. Provide training and support in line with the skills and interests of our members.
- J. Encourage reflection on ways to challenge and change social inequities.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND GOVERNANCE

Membership – Assigned elders and any members of FPC interested in advocating for social justice and caring for God’s creation.

Leadership – The chairperson will be an elder assigned by the moderator of session. Leaders for specific projects/activities and liaisons to other organizations will be volunteers designated by the chairperson.

MEETINGS

- A. JAC will meet a minimum of 3 times per year at a time designated by the chairperson. Every effort should be made to find times acceptable to as many members of the committee as possible.
- B. When necessary, e-mail communications to the entire committee or ZOOM type meetings can be used in lieu of in-person meetings.
- C. FPC members should be welcome to join meetings and offer input.

REPORTING

- A. The chairperson will report a summary of meetings to session and request approvals as necessary.
- B. The chairperson will also provide the annual end of the year report to the congregation.
- C. With chairperson approval, other members of JAC may report directly to session and/or provide information directly to the congregation or public.
- D. The chairperson will endeavor to find consensus and ensure that communications are aligned with the majority of the committee members’ wishes.

BACKGROUND

The Justice and Advocacy Committee (JAC) is a standing committee of session charged with responding to the scriptural calls detailed under “Purpose” from the PC(USA) Book of Order. In 2013 the Justice and Advocacy Committee was formed from its precursors the Public Policy and Advocacy, Peacemaking, and Peacekeeping committees as well as the

Mission Committee advocacy group. The original organizers of the Justice and Advocacy Committee were guided by **Holy Scripture**, and “*A Social Creed for the 21st Century*” adopted by PC(USA) with the National Council of Churches in 2008, and the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness. This office provides leadership for all congregations seeking to “Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God” as found in Micah 6:8. The church has a long history of applying these biblically and theologically-based insights to issues that affect the public — maintaining a public policy ministry in the nation’s capital since 1946. Then Director of the Office of Public Witness, former Stated Clerk, Dr. J. Herbert Nelson came to FPC in 2010 to speak to our congregation. Dr. Nelson has written that “Healthy congregations are measured by their ability to be change agents within the lives of whole communities and not simply by standards of personal salvation.” Members of JAC continue to answer God’s commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:28-31) and remember that “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” (Luke 12:48)